

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS YEREVAN 002324

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: LOCAL STATION DROPS RFE/RL NEWS SHOW

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) An independent TV news broadcast produced by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was cancelled on October 13 after airing a single episode. The director of the station denied government pressure. We believe, however, that this incident was an act of self-censorship to avoid conflict with the government, which keeps a tight rein on broadcast media. End Summary

RFE/RL'S SHORT RUN

2. (SBU) On October 10 and 11, Kentron television aired the only episode of a news program it produced in cooperation with RFE/RL. According to executives at Kentron and other media accounts, the public received the show favorably, but on October 13, Kentron dropped it from the schedule. Local opposition media and the RFE/RL service director in Prague speculated publicly that the government had forced Kentron to drop its cooperation with RFE/RL. Kentron director Petros Ghazarian, however, told us that no one representing the GOAM had contacted Kentron about the program.

OVERSHADOWED

3. (SBU) Kentron is often regarded as the "opposition" television station because of its managerial association with several opposition newspapers, and also because the station produces some of the more balanced television news in Yerevan. It lives in the shadow of Al-plus, an opposition television station that went off the air in 2002. (Note: Human rights groups believe Al-plus lost its license largely because of its support of the opposition. End Note.) Kentron began broadcasting on the same frequency shortly after the closure of Al-plus. In the past, Kentron has held back its on-air personalities, sometimes replacing reporters who became "too political," effectively censoring themselves.

COMMENT: THINGS THAT GET BUMPED IN THE NIGHT

4. (SBU) Whether or not it is justified, Kentron station management believes that the GOAM got rid of Al-plus, and Kentron is willing to self-censor in an effort to stay on the air. One viewer of the RFE/RL program praised the station for the show but asked, "will they [the authorities] let you go on?" We will never know because Kentron television executives pulled the plug themselves.

GODFREY